

MINUTE

of

DAMS TO DARNLEY COUNTRY PARK JOINT COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held at 2.00pm in The Library, City Chambers, Glasgow on 31 March 2014

Present:

Councillor Charlie Gilbert
Councillor Paul O'Kane

Councillor Bill Butler

Councillor Butler in the Chair (from Item 3)

Attending:

Fiona Campbell, Development and Regeneration Services Planner, Glasgow City Council; Stephen McHenry, Country Park Project Officer, East Renfrewshire Council; Julie Nicol, Principal Planning Officer, East Renfrewshire Council; Pete Miller, Landscape Design and Development Manager, Glasgow City Council; John Shevlin, Account Manager, Glasgow City Council; and Ron Leitch, Committee Services Officer, East Renfrewshire Council.

Apology:

Councillor Rashid Hussain.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

2. The Joint Committee considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive, East Renfrewshire Council, regarding appointments to the posts of Chair and Vice Chair for the coming year.

The report reminded Members that in terms of the Standing Orders for the Joint Committee the positions of Chair and Vice Chair were to be held alternately on an annual basis by a representative of either Council.

As the post of Chair had been held by Councillor Gilbert of East Renfrewshire Council for the past year, with the post of Vice Chair being held by Councillor Butler of Glasgow City Council, it was now necessary for new appointments to be made.

The Joint Committee agreed that Councillor Butler be appointed Chair and Councillor O'Kane be appointed Vice Chair for 2014/15.

Councillor Butler took the Chair at this point.

Councillor Butler then paid tribute to the work of Councillor Gilbert during his term of office.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3. The Joint Committee considered and approved the Minute of the meeting held on 2 December 2013.

QUARTERLY FINANCE UPDATE

4. The Joint Committee considered a report by the Executive Director of Financial Services and Deputy Chief Executive, Glasgow City Council, presenting the quarterly monitoring report for the period ending 14 February 2014.

The Account Manager explained that there were no significant variances against budget to report; that there had been a small overspend in revenue for the quarter; and that it was forecast that the probable spend for the financial year would be in line with the budget.

Following brief discussion, the Joint Committee agreed to note the position.

COUNTRY PARK BUDGET 2014/15

5. The Joint Committee considered a report by the Executive Director of Financial Services and Deputy Chief Executive, Glasgow City Council, presenting the Dams to Darnley Country Park budget for 2014/15.

The report set out the budget for 2014/15 highlighting revenue running costs of £136,000 comprising mainly staff costs of the countryside rangers, the Country Park Project Officer, other running costs and the annual audit fee. Total income included the contribution of £32,000 from East Renfrewshire Council and the revenue contribution of £70,000 from Glasgow City Council. The estimated capital budget was £47,000 with the priority being the construction of a new path and bridge from Newton Mearns to Balgray Reservoir, progress on which had been delayed as a result of landowner consent not yet being secured. The £47,000k capital budget represented an East Renfrewshire capital allocation associated with this project which it was anticipated would be carried over from the 2013/14 financial year.

Having heard the Account Manager confirm that the developer fund balance was expected to fall to £2k in 2013/14; that the fund would be spent, as required, in full by March 2015; that it had been agreed that Glasgow City Council would contribute £70k to the country park project in 2014/15; and that officers would continue to take forward development of the Country Park Plan, the Joint Committee agreed to note the report.

COUNTRY PARK GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

6. The Joint Committee considered a report by the Executive Director of Development and Regeneration Services, Glasgow City Council, seeking approval for revised governance arrangements for the Country Park project in future.

The report explained that the governance arrangements covering the Country Park project were set out in the Minute of Agreement between both Councils which outlined the roles and responsibilities of the Joint Committee, both local authorities and the Project Officer in relation to the project.

The Development and Regeneration Services Planner explained that the financial management responsibilities anticipated at the time of the drafting of the original Minute of Agreement had not come to fruition in their entirety. Therefore a decision required to be taken on whether to change the Minute of Agreement to reflect the current financial management arrangements or vice versa. Advice would be sought from both Councils' Directors of Finance in this regard and a report brought to a future meeting of the Joint Committee for consideration.

Having heard the Development and Regeneration Services Planner confirm, in response to an enquiry from Councillor Butler, that a further report would be brought to the next meeting, the Joint Committee agreed to note the report.

COUNTRY PARK SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

7. The Joint Committee considered a report by the Director of Environment, East Renfrewshire Council, advising of East Renfrewshire Council's intention to produce Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) allied to the East Renfrewshire Proposed Local Development Plan and to provide more detailed guidance on policies and proposals contained within the proposed plan relating to Dams to Darnley Country Park. The report explained that the SPG would be prepared in consultation with Glasgow City Council.

The report explained current legislation made provision for local authorities to prepare SPG in connection with a Local Development Plan (LDP) and when adopted, the SPG would form a statutory part of the LDP. The purpose of SPG was to provide detailed guidance on the nature and implementation of LDP policies and proposals to complement the more strategic policies contained in the LDP which provided the framework for development and future change. SPG translated LDP policies in more detail, providing the context and implications on the ground, and was an important tool in the Development Management process.

The Principal Planning Officer explained that the proposed East Renfrewshire LDP contained a range of policies and proposals which sought to provide enhancements to the Country Park by improving access, tourism and activities, and by encouraging appropriate commercial and leisure activity on key sites. In addition, a site at Lyoncross had been included in the proposed LDP as part of a wider master planned land release. Glasgow City Council had objected to the potential residential development of this site which lay within the Country Park. She went on to explain that although the opportunities mentioned were referred to in the proposed LDP and within the draft Country Park Plan 2014 – 2017, East Renfrewshire Council considered it desirable to set out greater detail in SPG for its planning purposes.

Responding to an enquiry from Councillor Butler, the Principal Planning Officer explained that the proposed SPG was expected to be submitted to East Renfrewshire Council within the following few weeks prior to being issued for a statutory 6 week consultation period. A copy of the SPG would be presented to the Joint Committee for noting prior to the SPG being submitted to East Renfrewshire Council for final approval.

Having heard the Principal Planning Officer confirm that officers from Glasgow City Council would be consulted during preparation of the SPG, the Joint Committee agreed to:-

- (a) note the content of the report; and
- (b) note that a copy of the Supplementary Planning Guidance would be submitted to the next meeting of the Joint Committee for information.

Resolution to Exclude Press and Public

At this point in the meeting, on the motion of the Chair, the committee unanimously resolved that in accordance with the provisions of Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Act.

COUNTRY PARK PLAN 2014 - 17

8. The Joint Committee considered a report by the Director of Environment, East Renfrewshire Council, presenting the draft Country Park Plan 2014/17 for approval and advising of the resultant priorities for the Country Park during 2014/15.

The report explained that in addition to ongoing priorities, including the countryside ranger events and activities, key priorities for 2014/15 contained within the plan included the establishment of a path link from Newton Mearns to the Country Park from Whitecraigs Rugby Club; progressing discussions in relation to non-motorised watersports at Balgray Reservoir; working with partners to develop business cases for Country Park visitor facilities including appropriate delivery models and funding bids; examining and progressing on-site interpretation within the Country Park; producing a Country Park information leaflet; and upgrading existing paths within Darnley Mill and Waulkmill Glen.

The Project Officer went on to remind Members that a Country Park Business Plan was in the process of being finalised, and that following meetings between relevant officers of both councils, it had been agreed that it would be beneficial to integrate the Country Park Business Plan with the Country Park Development and Management Plan and for the combined plan to be reviewed annually in April. Consequently, the combined Country Park Plan drew upon and updated the Development and Management Plan. Additionally it sought to progress the Country Park by examining funding and income generation options; visitor facility options; and alternative delivery and asset management mechanisms.

The draft Country Park Plan, a copy of which was appended to the report, reiterated the background to the establishment of the Country Park; the current stage of development of the project; and the aims, vision and objectives of the project. The plan went on to set out a number of short-term revenue generating options including corporate volunteer activities; health promoting and intervention projects and events and specialist activities. Although offering the potential for small scale income generation, planning and delivery of the above options would entail the redirection of staff, in particular the countryside rangers, away from their current activities and would therefore require to be balanced in terms of their cost/benefit and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

The plan went on to outline a number of alternative maintenance delivery options for the Country Park including a social enterprise based training initiative or potentially as part of the urban woodland scheme in partnership with Forestry Commission Scotland. Also outlined were a number of options for Country Park visitor facilities including the watersports facility referred to earlier; a visitor centre adjacent to Aurs Road; and an environmental education base, possibly located at the north end of Darnley Mill. The plan, as currently developed,

pointed to the income generation potential of visitor facilities which could contribute to the aim of ensuring the longer-term sustainability of the Country Park. The extent to which any net income could support Country Park costs was likely to be influenced by the delivery model adopted and in particular the capital, including grant funding, which potential partners would bring with them.

The Project Officer concluded his remarks by outlining a number of community involvement and not-for-profit options which could be considered including the potential role of a “Friends of Glasgow’s Local Nature Reserves” group with discussions already underway in terms of a potential funding bid; and longer-term the possible establishment of a joint venture community interest company or social enterprise involving, for example, landowners, council partners, operators, and governing bodies possibly under the umbrella of a community watersports trust or club or even a community sports hub. The Country Park Steering Group established by the Minute of Agreement signed by both councils, would continue to monitor progress on existing priorities and agree the implementation of future priorities by officers representing both local authorities.

During further discussion, in the course of which the Project Officer further clarified the possible composition and operation of a community interest company, explaining that it represented a “halfway house” between the not for profit and fully commercial models; that the maximum aggregate dividend must not exceed 35% of distributable profits generated; and that it would require professional guidance on how it should be set up and run if approved. He also confirmed that the proposed watersports facility would be available for use by schools and that one potential operator had already expressed an interest in the proposal. It was noted that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) still required to be finalised in relation to the draft plan.

Having heard Councillors Gilbert and O’Kane congratulate the Project Officer for the level of detail contained in the report, the Joint Committee agreed:-

- (a) to approve the draft Dams to Darnley Country Park Plan 2014 – 2017; and
- (b) subject to the completion of the Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Equalities Impact Assessment mentioned above, to approve the priorities for 2014/15.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Taking cognisance of the time required for officers to complete the reports requested prior the next meeting as agreed above, the Clerk undertook to email Elected Members seeking their availability for a meeting in early to mid-June and thereafter to submit a report to the next meeting proposing dates for the remainder of 2014/15.

CHAIR